

Jonathan Gold's 99 Essential L.A. Restaurants

By [Jonathan Gold](#)

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As we've said before, an essential restaurant is one that reflects Los Angeles in a startling and unusual way, that uses fresh local ingredients in a fashion that respects the land in which they were grown, that showcases cooking echoing both foreign-trained chefs' region of origin and the hypercharged mosaic of the L.A. dining scene. An essential restaurant moves people, inspires them to think about food in a different way, inspires them to think about Southern California as a great agricultural region, a great port, a builder of the shiny symbolism that is a large factor in how the rest of the world thinks of itself. And it's also a damned good place to eat. —J.G.



* Huckleberry

Sunday mornings at Huckleberry, the new bakery/café from Rustic Canyon pastry chef [Zoe Nathan](#), come perilously close to full-contact brunch, a scrum of [Lululemon](#) and UCLA sweatshirts. There is a line to get into the line here, and not an orderly one. Customers angle for views of the chalkboard menu, bribe small children to scout the pastry case, and jostle for tables in front of the

serene counterstaff, who have obviously done enough yoga to rise above the petty turmoil of the crowd. At Huckleberry, even the governor waits in line. Nathan, the pastry chef, is beginning to get the kind of food-world attention previously reserved for Sherry Yard and [Nancy Silverton](#), and her reputation for homey, carefully constructed desserts may be exceeded only by the buzz about this bakery. And it is worth a certain amount of trouble to get a crack at her prosciutto-stuffed croissants, so buttery that they threaten to spurt like a well-constructed chicken [Kiev](#), or her flaky bacon-maple biscuits; her crumbly rustic tarts stuffed with goat cheese or her ultrarich flatbread. Brisket hash? Sure. Green eggs and ham is reinterpreted as pesto drizzled over sunnyside-up eggs nestled into La Quercia prosciutto on a housemade English muffin, and afternoons see sandwiches and rotisserie chicken — duck on Thursdays! 1014 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, (310) 451-2311, huckleberrycafe.com.

*Open Tues.-Fri. 8 a.m-7 p.m., Sat.-Sun. 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Takeout and retail bakery.
Street parking. AE, MC, V.*